

May 16, 2008



**TRANSCRIPT  
May 16, 2008**

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**PRESENT**

Councilmember Michael Knapp, President  
Councilmember Roger Berliner  
Councilmember Valerie Ervin  
Councilmember George Leventhal

Councilmember Phil Andrews, Vice President  
Councilmember Marc Elrich  
Councilmember Nancy Floreen  
Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg



May 16, 2008

1 President Knapp,

2 Good morning, everyone. I want to welcome everybody back. When last we left our  
3 discussion, we had many questions left to be answered. Fortunately, I think the Council  
4 has answered many of them. And so I am very [inaudible] with the assistance of many  
5 of you in the room, and I'm very appreciative of your efforts. I really want to say thank  
6 you to everyone that is here, those who support the people who are here. I think this  
7 has been a, as it often is, a long discussion as it relates to the budget. Often the budget  
8 is a slow jog and then a sprint to the finish in many respects. This year it's been a  
9 marathon that we've run at top speed, which makes it a little more interesting. So I know  
10 everyone is tired, but I think the end is, in fact, in sight. As we learned yesterday, we  
11 were close to an agreement. Out of a \$4 billion budget we were down to our --  
12 effectively our finally \$20 million in reductions. And given the challenges that we faced  
13 going into the budget, and potentially some of the economic challenges we face in the  
14 upcoming year, that's not too bad. I think we can get there, and I think we can do it in a  
15 fiscally and morally responsible way. We had a lively session yesterday. I think we'll be,  
16 hopefully, not quite as lively today. But I think it's important that the conversations the  
17 Council had last night were fruitful and successful. And so what I think what we have  
18 before us today is a proposal that addresses the concerns of -- I hope -- the eight  
19 Councilmembers you see before us, and also meet the needs of our residents and of  
20 our employees. I have distributed to Councilmembers, I don't know -- have others seen  
21 this yet? Okay. What the Council will present today, or what I will present is a proposal  
22 that will reduce the amount of property tax proposed by the County Executive by \$20  
23 million. We will keep the property tax rates at -- propose to keep the property tax rates  
24 at the current level, so no reduction but no increase. And provide a credit to owner-  
25 occupied homes of \$579, which is a little bit less than the credit the Council provided  
26 our property owners last year. We will reduce expenditures and change resources in the  
27 following way: we will assume \$8 million each from County Government and  
28 Montgomery County Public Schools to be achieved by reducing employee and  
29 personnel costs and securing productivity improves and increased efficiencies; and  
30 each will report back to the Council about how these reductions will be achieved. And  
31 \$1 million in fund balance from Montgomery College. \$3.5 million from the Council's  
32 changes on May 15 to PAGO and the FY09 Capital Budget and resources for Park and  
33 Planning. And that will be the modification to what the Council's actions have been  
34 taken to date. There was a lot of discussion. There was a lot of talk last night. And I  
35 think the important thing was that as is important in a legislative body, people work  
36 towards each other, work towards consensus, and working with the community broadly  
37 came to a very, I think, successful outcome. The budget that we -- I hopefully will  
38 approve momentarily will have a -- will only grow by 2.9% in a tax-supported budget.  
39 We are roughly \$9 million below in spending what the County Executive had  
40 recommended. And the overall total tax -- overall budget is about 3.7%, but the tax-  
41 supported piece, which we have the most responsibility for, is only up 2.9%. When is  
42 the last time that our budget grew at such a low rate?

43  
44 Steve Farber



May 16, 2008

1 I think it's been quite some time.

2  
3 President Knapp,

4 Quite some time. So I think that to our taxpayers, we can say that we have recognized  
5 the fiscal challenges that are out there and have risen to the occasion to meet them. By  
6 the same token, I think, as a number of colleagues said yesterday, we have also  
7 recognized the core services that our community requires, and made sure that we have  
8 provided the resources there, be they police officers in the streets, corrections officers in  
9 the correctional facility, our firefighters, our teachers, our service workers. We have  
10 done a job, I think, to get all of those addressed in a way that doesn't necessarily grow  
11 in the direction that we would like as quickly as we would like, but certainly keeps pace  
12 with where we need to be to make those core services available to our residents, while  
13 at the same time recognizing the fiscal challenges that we have. And so I am very  
14 thankful to all of my colleagues for their hard work late into the hours -- to the late hours  
15 last evening, and continuing early this morning. Thank all of you who have -- were  
16 assisting us in that process. And I present that budget proposal to my colleagues.  
17 [Inaudible] by Councilmember Leventhal. Any comments? Council Vice President  
18 Andrews.

19  
20 Vice President Andrews,

21 Thank you, President Knapp. Well thank you for your good leadership in pulling the  
22 Council together. I think the extra day that the Council took to put this together was well  
23 worth it. It is a budget that is, I believe, significantly better than the budget that we  
24 considered yesterday. It provides significantly less impact on property taxpayers than  
25 what we considered yesterday. It will find savings in employee costs that will help close  
26 this gap. And we hope that those savings will be permanent savings. And this requires  
27 that the agencies to report back to us about how those will be achieved. I want to thank  
28 all my colleagues for all of the work that they did during this budget. People worked  
29 extremely hard, and I think the Council pulled together at the end. Everybody gave a  
30 little bit to come up with a package that I think everybody can live with, and that is better  
31 than what we had yesterday. It's important for the Council to act in that way. It's a  
32 Council that needs to work together closely and I believe we have. And we have  
33 produced a sound budget for this year given the circumstances that we face. We can  
34 expect that the coming year is going to be tough as well given the forecast, given what  
35 we hear from the State. And we're going to have to pull together again next year  
36 probably to make some hard choices. But I think this moves us in the right direction. We  
37 need to, I believe, keep pressure on the agencies to find efficiencies, to find savings, to  
38 look for ways to combine work done, and to look when a position becomes vacant as to  
39 whether it has to be filled. That has been an approach that has been used by the  
40 Council office successfully under Steve Farber's leadership, and the work years are  
41 actually reduced on the Council staff since Mr. Farber became staff director 15, 16, 17  
42 years ago. So we want to encourage all agencies to look hard at whether programs  
43 should continue in their current form, whether all positions need to be filled when they  
44 become vacant. We've looked at the Executive's Retirement Savings Incentive, the



May 16, 2008

1 early retirement. And we need to be careful about spreading ourselves too thin. The  
2 County Government has grown substantially in the last decade at a pace that can't be  
3 sustain if the pay increases that people want are to be sustained; so there has to be real  
4 hard work done to find those efficiencies. And I think this will help achieve that. I  
5 appreciate, again, the work done by Council President Knapp on this. I know that he's  
6 looking forward after his trip to the Bond Rating agencies, as Councilmember  
7 Trachtenberg is, to time to reflect and catch up on some sleep. But I think this budget is  
8 a sound budget, and one that reflects the values of the community.

9  
10 President Knapp,  
11 Thank you very much. Councilmember Leventhal.

12  
13 Councilmember Leventhal,  
14 Well, once again, good job, Mr. President. Thank you for the good work you've put in,  
15 the long hours you've put in. We all enjoy working with you. You have an easygoing  
16 personality, but a spine of steel when you need to. And we appreciate that. My friend,  
17 Mr. Berliner, said yesterday that he believes his constituents are angry. And I hope that  
18 the very fortunate residents of Bethesda Chevy Chase and Potomac will realize that  
19 they are among the luckiest people on earth. But I represent them too, and I hear anger  
20 from them as well. But many of the things that our constituents are angry about are  
21 things that are totally out of the control of the Montgomery County Council. I hear from a  
22 lot of constituents are angry about the war in Iraq. The United States is squandering  
23 hundreds of billions, more than a trillion dollars squandered on a huge mistake. And the  
24 resources that are going into building schools and infrastructure in Iraq and that are not  
25 coming here to Montgomery County to build schools and infrastructure are a scandal.  
26 And constituents are angry about rising gasoline prices. And constituents are angry  
27 about lowering property values. And really there isn't much that Montgomery County  
28 Council can do about any of those things. But our constituents know how to find us, and  
29 we return our phone calls. So my constituents can't complain to George Bush and Dick  
30 Cheney, but they can get to see me and they can get in to see Marc, and Nancy, and  
31 Duchy, and Mike, and Phil, and Roger, and Valerie. So we do catch the brunt of a lot of  
32 people's concerns that we may or may not be able to address. So we've worked very  
33 hard and we've had a lot of conversations over the last several hours. And we're  
34 bringing forward a budget that I think keeps faith with the people we represent, and  
35 meets our responsibilities. I'm very optimistic again, I referred to it yesterday when my  
36 friends Duchy and Mike and Ike go up to New York on Tuesday, that we'll maintain the  
37 very best bond rating that we can possibly get, because we have almost the very best  
38 local government that we can possibly have. Can it be better? Sure. We're going to  
39 continue to come up with good ideas. We're going to continue to seek efficiencies, as  
40 this budget requires both the school system and the Executive Branch to do. But we just  
41 have a very, very good local government here. And I want to be very clear that the  
42 budget we're voting on today honors the principle that a contract is a contract. We're not  
43 breaking the contracts. And that is a very important principle. When government makes  
44 a promise, our public should expect that the promise will be fulfilled. We've had a good



May 16, 2008

1 conversation over the last several hours. And we do agree we had a split yesterday, but  
2 we do agree on several things. And one of the things that I think we agree on is that we  
3 understand that in this round of contracts we have to honor the commitments that were  
4 made. And in the next rounds of contracts we need to make certain that contracts are  
5 negotiated with very serious concern about trajectory, about long-term sustainability.  
6 Those concerns are real. And we do have a contract negotiation process that is driven  
7 by that half of the budget, the public schools, that don't have the responsibility to  
8 balance the budget. And that's a real concern and it's a concern I've expressed before.  
9 So we do need to make certain that when public school contracts, and all contracts, are  
10 negotiated that all the branches of the local government, the schools and the County,  
11 are in close communication that the information that our economists have in County  
12 Government is available to the school system, and that we think very, very hard about  
13 trajectory and long-term sustainability. We agree on that. That's not an issue on which  
14 the Council is divided. I got an email in the middle of the night from one of my  
15 constituents and one of our employees. And she thanked me and Councilmember Ervin  
16 for the strong words of support that we had given to firefighters, police and bus drivers.  
17 And she said, don't forget the nurses and the social workers. And I think perhaps this  
18 constituent didn't know that I'm chairman of the Health and Human Services Committee.  
19 I want to really thank my colleagues for the strong support that budget provides for  
20 health and human services. It's not a big growth year but we added money for  
21 community clinics. We added money to provide flexibility for the frailest and neediest  
22 elderly people to make sure that if the hours we're providing for in-home care are  
23 inadequate that we'll address that. And we added money to make sure that those who  
24 are struggling with drug and alcohol addictions continue to have access to treatment  
25 beds. And that's something we can feel good about. And we're implementing a Housing  
26 First approach to getting homeless people off the street that is going to require  
27 measurable outcomes and measurable results. And so while the fortunate residents  
28 who have homes in Chevy Chase, Potomac and Bethesda are having a lower property  
29 tax burden today than they might have had under the budget that we voted for  
30 yesterday; this budget also makes sure that people who have no homes maybe have an  
31 opportunity to get homes. So I'm going to vote for this budget. And we're all going to try  
32 to get along. We had some disagreements on the Council. We had some things we  
33 share in common. We're very fortunate to serve on this County Council. We're very  
34 fortunate to live in this County. And every year when we pass the budget we have the  
35 opportunity to remind ourselves, even if we sometimes get angry, just how fortunate we  
36 really are.

37  
38  
39 President Knapp,  
40 Councilmember Berliner.

41  
42 Councilmember Berliner,  
43 Thank you, Council President. Councilmember Floreen remarked to me the other day  
44 that conflict is a good thing. And there's much truth in that observation, because conflict



May 16, 2008

1 is an inherent part of human nature. But what is important isn't conflict, it's how we  
2 resolve conflict that counts. And I think this last 20 hours has shown the best of this  
3 Council and of this community in coming together and resolving conflict in a way that  
4 really does find common ground, not at the lowest common denominator but at the  
5 highest common denominator. And that should always be our goal. And I think this  
6 budget resolution reflects that. In 20 hours we came up with \$20 million in savings. Now  
7 we probably can't do that every hour of the day, but at the end of the budget process to  
8 make that kind of step forward on behalf of our burdened taxpayers, that's a good thing.  
9 And that is a result of a divided Council having to grapple with how we can come  
10 together. So I am pleased. I will support this budget. Like Chair Leventhal, this budget  
11 does a lot of good things for a lot of people in a very difficult time. And it does honor our  
12 contracts. So we've done well by our taxpayers. We've done well by our constituents.  
13 We've done well by the most vulnerable among us who need our help. We've done well  
14 by our students who need the best education we can possibly provide, and provide it  
15 year in and year out. And this Council is committed to doing so. So we have a lot to be  
16 proud of in a difficult budget climate in which we had difficult choices to make. And  
17 we've got more savings that we have to achieve going forward, because next year isn't  
18 going to be a pretty year. All indications are that this is not a one-year blip. The  
19 economic forces at play nationally are not going to suddenly turn around. I wish they  
20 would. I hope they do, but it's likely they won't, which means next year is going to be  
21 hard and we're going to have hard conversations then. And we're going have to find  
22 savings. A number of my colleagues have talked repeatedly about an effort that I hope  
23 Chair Trachtenberg will take up and perhaps we could even have reflected in our final  
24 action a week from now. Councilmember Leventhal, Councilmember Elrich, among  
25 others have talked about the need for institutionalizing that which MCGEO basically did  
26 this year in terms of offering up suggestions for how workers can find ways to make  
27 government more efficient. And we need to have that not on an ad hoc basis but on a  
28 permanent basis. And so we need an advisory committee composed of labor, of the  
29 Executive Branch, of Council that will work on an ongoing basis and report back to us in  
30 time for next year's budget on efficiencies that can be found. Because we must find  
31 them, and we need the people who are there on the front line every day to be our eyes  
32 and ears and to be the ones who can tell us this is where we can make savings. So I  
33 hope that perhaps there is a procedure whereby when we vote next -- a week from  
34 today on the final budget or a week from Thursday -- a week from yesterday, that we  
35 could have some mechanism whereby that piece could be part of what we put in place.  
36 Council President and I thank my colleagues for their work on this budget.

37  
38 President Knapp,  
39 Councilmember Floreen.

40  
41 Councilmember Floreen,  
42 Thank you. Well my hat is off to our absolutely unflappable Council President. That is a  
43 personality trait that served you well, Mr. Knapp, and has really allowed eight really very  
44 different people with some very different priorities and perspectives to come to what I



May 16, 2008

1 believe is going to be a unanimous vote. And it is quite a compromise; it is. And so my  
2 hat is off to everybody else here as well, as well as the folks in the room. You know I've  
3 been saying since the get go that I thought the property tax rate increase that was  
4 propose was untenable, and we've been able to eliminate. I think that's an excellent  
5 thing. I've said from the get go, and I think most of us have agreed, we needed to  
6 reduce our spending. And we haven't reduced it as much as some of us would like, but  
7 we've reduced it by \$10 million over what was proposed. And I think that is an excellent  
8 thing. This is a great achievement for us. Where at the same time, we serve the various  
9 constituencies that we all feel most passionately about; the health and human services  
10 world, the education world, the public safety world. I think we're at a place that we can  
11 all be really quite proud of under the circumstances. It is perfect? Nothing we do is ever  
12 perfect. Mr. Wyman, I know, is thinking of his comments to the Gazette on the subject.  
13 But nonetheless I think it is a tremendous achievement that so many different views  
14 have been brought together here. And I agree, and I'm glad Mr. Berliner was reminded  
15 of our conversation, because I think disagreement can get you real compromise in the  
16 end. And I think that's we've achieved, and I think that speaks well for this full.

17  
18 President Knapp,  
19 Councilmember Trachtenberg.

20  
21 Councilmember Trachtenberg,  
22 Thank you, President Knapp. Well, what a difference that a day makes. Here we are  
23 this morning, and I would expect very fully that we have consensus and no easy  
24 accomplishment. I think what Councilmember Floreen indicated about eight different  
25 people with different experiences and different perspectives very much speaks to this  
26 body, but also it speaks to the spirit in which we've had this debate in the way and  
27 manner in which the decisions have been made. And I really want to underscore that  
28 because I think most of you out there, and even those watching had listening know that  
29 this has not been an easy process that there are many challenges; not just in terms of  
30 priorities but clearly we're poised for more difficult circumstances next year. In fact, my  
31 staff -- one of my staff members earlier today had a very sobering conversation with the  
32 State Controller, who indicated very clearly to him that he thought we were really facing  
33 and looking at more cuts through the State. Undoubtedly that's exactly the kind of  
34 environment that's going to have a trickle-down impact on this County and what this  
35 Council can do. And when you couple that with the irresponsible actions of our Federal  
36 Government, that's really the big reason we're in the pickle that we're in, where the  
37 burden on local government on county jurisdictions continues to grow. But a leap of faith  
38 is required here in those that serve, and also in the general public. And I think that's  
39 what this morning really is about. I would echo some of the concerns that were raised  
40 by Councilmember Leventhal about the equity and process. I certainly believe that when  
41 we're talking about sustainability, our fiscal sustainability, there's no way you can  
42 achieve that without having everyone at the table, with having transparent dialogue. And  
43 with those of us over here who have to make the hard decisions having a full  
44 understanding of the implications of different items that are negotiated and agreed to. I,



May 16, 2008

1 in the past few weeks, have very openly and publicly discussed labor management, an  
2 initiative that I'd like to put forward. I know Councilmember Berliner mentioned it in his  
3 remarks. I'm hopeful that over the course of the next few months this is something that  
4 we can talk about within the committee that I chair. I feel very strongly about it because  
5 in the final analysis, it's the people that really make the change. It's actually not about  
6 just the eight of us that are sitting up here this morning and the County Executive; it's  
7 about all of you as well. I support the budget that's being proposed this morning  
8 because it does precisely what I was concerned about from the very beginning, which is  
9 it addresses the large property tax increase. And in effect, it eliminates it. And that was  
10 where I was going in all of my remarks. So I'm very delighted about that. It also secures  
11 some operational savings, which I think are critical as well. And that's something I will --  
12 I can absolutely state for the record we'll be very happy to discuss with the bond rating  
13 agencies next week, because I know that that's what they want to see; because they  
14 know, like we know, that we are facing very difficult times in the not too distant future.  
15 And obviously, one of the reasons I support this as well is because I do believe that it  
16 addresses the needs of the vulnerable here in Montgomery County. I am very excited  
17 about the fact that my colleagues have committed to maintaining the services that we  
18 have, and even putting a little extra in there, certainly in the area of addiction services,  
19 which I think you all know are quite important to me. And I've got a personal ambition in  
20 this as well, because I very much look forward to the day when I can actually have my  
21 son come home and receive the services here in the County that I really think he needs.  
22 And that is a passion that I will continue to pursue as I sit here on the Council. Again, I  
23 support what's being proposed this morning. And I look forward to the conversation that  
24 I know we will have with the Executive Branch around the savings that have been  
25 identified. I also want to encourage union leadership to work with the County Executive  
26 on that, and also to work with this body. And yesterday while I sat here, I quoted some  
27 words that were shared with me by Councilmember Praisner. And I've got another one  
28 to share this morning. She often told me that I needed to keep my eyes on the prize.  
29 And I'm going to encourage all of you and my colleagues to do the same. And the prize  
30 -- our fiscal security, which ensures the wonderful quality of life that we are blessed to  
31 enjoy here in Montgomery County.

32  
33 President Knapp,  
34 Thank you. Councilmember Ervin.

35  
36 Councilmember Ervin,  
37 I want to start by thanking Mike Knapp -- President Mike Knapp for his awesome ability  
38 to herd eight cats. And I know it wasn't easy. We all have rings under our eyes from lack  
39 of sleep. We're all very exhausted. But I think at the end of the day we will come to  
40 some agreement. I'm not actually having a kum-by-ya moment right now. I'm not  
41 jumping up and down feeling like I need to hold hands and pretend like what we ended  
42 up with is what I believe personally was the right way to go. As a matter of fact, I was  
43 listening to Councilmember Andrews say that we've come to some significant savings,  
44 at \$20 million to me is not significant in a \$4.2 billion budget. And when you sort of



May 16, 2008

1 spread that out among all homeowners, taxpayers, in the County, that's not going to be  
2 very significant savings. And we had a budget yesterday that I would have much rather  
3 voted for, but I'm doing the job that I was elected to do. If this is the compromise, which  
4 I want to just tell the truth about this right now -- the compromise was broached before I  
5 got the phone call. So I'm going to vote for this. I'm not happy about it. I think that the  
6 pulling together of the team, I'm still waiting to see what that really means. It's not been  
7 easy. And there are times as the only person of color representing this Council, there  
8 are many times when I feel like I have not been afforded the same opportunity to play  
9 ball. And so I just want to be honest with people about that this morning. And my final  
10 comments on this budget are something that I would like to leave to all the 30,000  
11 employees who serve us with great distinction every single day, and it comes from  
12 Psalms 35; and in it Isaiah said, "For anger is for but a moment. His favor is for life.  
13 Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Now in my prosperity I  
14 say I shall not be moved. We shall not be moved."

15  
16 President Knapp,  
17 Thank you. Councilmember Elrich.

18  
19 Councilmember Elrich,  
20 I was one of those who voted against the budget yesterday. And I said in closing that I  
21 hoped that everybody would spend the next few hours listening and thinking about what  
22 everybody had said, and try to find and come to some common ground. And I'm glad  
23 that a lot of us stayed around and kept bouncing ideas off each other, sometimes  
24 arguing with each other. George and I had some exchanges yesterday afternoon.

25  
26 Councilmember Leventhal,  
27 You had to go and put that on the record?

28  
29 Councilmember Trachtenberg,  
30 It's not a secret.

31  
32 Councilmember Elrich,  
33 But the reality is we talked to each other and we listened to each other that people didn't  
34 say, I'm not talking to this person because that person is in a different point -- has a  
35 different point of view. People kept going at each other and walking in and out of rooms.  
36 And I thought that was a good thing. I thought that this Council was wrestling with a  
37 couple of principles yesterday. One is the obligation to employees. And I felt and said  
38 from the beginning that I felt obligated to fund the contracts because if the Council didn't  
39 like the contracts we shouldn't have funded them last year. We had a chance to reject  
40 them. We didn't reject them. And I felt that that was opportunity to say no, if we were  
41 going to say no. We didn't say no. And it wasn't like we weren't warned that this year  
42 was not going to be a picnic. We were told by the Executive that this year was not going  
43 to be a picnic. So we got the non-picnic situation and the problems we wanted. I think  
44 the other obligation was the taxpayers to try to structure a more sustainable budget.



May 16, 2008

1 And I think there are -- people certainly had in mind how are we going to make sure this  
2 budget is more sustainable going on. And I agree with Valerie. The \$20 million doesn't  
3 guarantee anything; \$20 million is not going to be the difference that we're facing next  
4 year in the budget. I think we'd all be relieved right now and not even thinking, talking  
5 about next year if all we thought was there was going to be a \$20 million difference next  
6 year. I think all of us expect it to be a lot greater. So I was glad that at the end of the day  
7 we came out with something that met the obligation to employees and moved us in the  
8 direction of a more sustainable budget. I felt really conflicted and I'm more than willing  
9 to admit to some of schizophrenia about this. I thought some services got cut too  
10 deeply. And I thought that we didn't initiate new programs and directions that I think a lot  
11 of us would like to go in. There's been a lot of talk, for example, about what we need to  
12 do in the early childhood area. And it's certainly going to require more funding than what  
13 we've put out there to date. And our initiatives right now are rather limited in that. And at  
14 the same time, there weren't some of the structural changes I thought could have  
15 occurred in this budget, and that I hope occur by the time we get to the next budget.  
16 And I didn't think the budget provided as much tax progressivity as I would have liked.  
17 Twenty-four hours does make a difference. I think, you know, some of the tax  
18 progressivity has been restored to the budget. I think that we met the principles that  
19 many of us had. And sometimes when those principles conflicted with each other, we  
20 did find a way to work ourselves out of it. I think that it's important to note that the  
21 property tax relief is as much at the bottom as it is at the top, and will be felt very  
22 strongly in the neighborhoods not in Potomac and Avondale and that part of the world,  
23 but it will be felt very strongly in the neighborhoods of Silver Spring and Wheaton and  
24 elsewhere, where the increases that were originally proposed by the committee would  
25 have been much more -- felt much more deeply by those with much less means to pay  
26 for them. And so I think, you know, we provided more relief for folks in that area. And I  
27 think that's a good thing. I hope that the message to the Executive and the school side  
28 is that we don't want to see items from the reconciliation list brought back as the cuts  
29 that we talked about when we said we wanted to find \$8 million in savings. I think the  
30 view of the Council is that we really are looking for structural changes, not simply  
31 bouncing the reconciliation list back to [inaudible]. If we had wanted the cuts off the  
32 reconciliation, we would have made the cuts off the reconciliation list. We didn't do that.  
33 And I thought that was because the arguments made by the Ed Committee and the  
34 other committees made on the reconciliation list were good arguments. I hope that on at  
35 least our side of the County that the Executive finds a way to clone Art Wallenstein. I  
36 feel obligated to call him out again because I thought his solution to the problem in the  
37 Corrections Department and how he achieved his savings is the way things ought to be  
38 done in the County. He looked at two vacancies and he didn't say, how quickly could I  
39 fill the vacancies; he said, it is possible to redistribute the workload from those two  
40 vacancies to existing jobs so I don't have to fill those vacancies. And he found a way to  
41 do it. And that was the creative, sensible approach that allowed us to achieve budget  
42 savings and continue the job of County Government. No services were lost. No  
43 diminution of what we try to provide our citizens was required. He saved money and he  
44 did it, I think, in a sensible way. So if you guys can clone Art and use him to, you know,



May 16, 2008

1 provide advice in general in how things should be done, I think it's a good thing. I will be  
2 voting for this budget today. It is -- I think all of us agree it's not the perfect budget, but  
3 it's a better budget I think than the one we were looking at yesterday by some margin.  
4 And that margin is sufficient, I think, for all of us to come together and say this is where  
5 we want to go forward this year. So I'm happy to be voting for it.  
6

7 President Knapp,

8 Thank you very much. And that's it. No, I just wanted to close by saying you've heard  
9 everyone say we stayed late. We worked hard. And that's good. We didn't do anything  
10 that was all that different than from what you do every day. We'd had diverse, complex  
11 views. We worked together. We brought those views together to hopefully achieve a  
12 common good. And that's what you guys are addressing in our community each and  
13 every day, and most people are. And that's one of the things I think makes this  
14 community so exciting. So we did work hard, and we did do good things. We're not  
15 necessarily unique in that. And everybody is doing that in government and in our private  
16 sector of Montgomery County each and every day. Through the course of my career the  
17 one thing that has always been important to me is to take care of your people. I find if  
18 you do that everything else works. And I think with what we've put here now, we are  
19 doing that; we are taking care of our people. And I think that's the important thing for us.  
20 And so I appreciate everyone's efforts. And with that we have a motion before us on the  
21 -- a straw vote on the aggregate Operating Budget for FY09. Seeing no further  
22 discussion, all in support indicate by raising your hand. That is unanimous. Thank you  
23 very much. We are adjourned.  
24  
25  
26  
27